

# mindset

## BOOK DIGEST

### THE TRUTH ABOUT ABILITY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

#### Negative labels and how they work

“Everyone knows negative labels are bad, so you’d think this would be a short section.

But it isn’t a short section, because psychologists are learning how negative labels harm achievement.”

After this impactful statement, Carol Dweck walks us through the **damages done by stereotypes**. Any member of a stereotyped group is well aware of their negative impact.

Research shows that even checking a box indicating our race or sex can lower our test scores! Because we get immediately flooded by distracting thoughts reactivating our secret worries that we will end up confirming the stereotype put on us. It drains our mental power and there’s not enough left to do our best on our test performance. However this happens **mostly** when we get stuck in a fixed mindset.

With a **fixed mindset**, labels are therefore toxic whether they’re positive or negative. The **positive** labels bring the fear of **losing** them, and the **negative** ones, the fear of **deserving** them.

The **growth mindset** protects us because it **allows us to stop believing in any kind of permanent inferiority**. Even if we’re behind, we can catch up by working harder. It allows us to take what we can and need, even from a threatening environment. For instance, she shows how even the most obnoxious person’s teachings can be valuable, if we can filter what doesn’t serve us and only focus on what the value their skills and experience bring.

#### **Stereotypes also harm us by attacking our sense of belonging.**

The growth mindset allows us to fight back. We can acknowledge that the stereotype is disturbing to us (“**AS IT SHOULD BE**” reminds us Carol Dweck) and still stay confident and comfortable with ourselves.

“Prejudice is a deeply ingrained societal problem, and I do not want to blame the victims of it.

I am simply saying that a growth mindset helps people to see prejudice for what it is  
—someone’s view of them—

and to confront it with their confidence and abilities intact.”

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After the very important point summarized in the last quote, she leads us to reflect on [the power we give to other people's opinions](#).

[Women especially](#) tend to trust them all too much. Her theory ties this phenomenon on the differences between how boys and girls tend to be raised. Girls are widely praised as children for being perfect, well-behaved, cute, helpful and precocious. Boys tend to be scolded and punished a lot more. Carol Dweck shares that boys got eight times more criticism than girls in an observational study conducted in a grade school classroom!!

=> Our worldview can be greatly impacted by this, with girls thinking "People are so nice! If they ever criticize me, it has to mean I did something wrong"... and boys learning--somewhat out of necessity--to disempower other people's opinions early on.

She reminds us that  
*"this vulnerability afflicts many of the most able, high-achieving females"*  
and that it can still impact them even when  
*"women reach the pinnacle of success"*.

*"The fixed mindset, plus stereotyping, plus women's trust in other people's assessments of them:  
all of these contribute to the gender gap in math and science.  
(...)"*

*And women need all the growth mindset they can get to take their rightful places in these fields."*

So here's [another powerful feature](#) of the growth mindset:

*"The growth mindset lets people—even those who are targets of negative labels—use and develop their minds fully.*

*Their heads are not filled with limiting thoughts, a fragile sense of belonging, a*

*nd a belief that other people can define them."*

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### SPORTS: THE MINDSET OF A CHAMPION

In this chapter Carol Dweck shares many [stories of sports icons](#) and guides us into understanding how either the fixed or the growth [mindset led their behavior](#).

[Talent](#) can be our greatest [springboard](#)! And it can be a [vicious trap](#). In sports, maybe more than anywhere else, the idea of “being a natural” or not standing a chance shows up at almost every corner. And adding insult to injury, follows the notion that when you’re a natural, you “shouldn’t” need to put any effort.

She walks us alongside [Michael Jordan](#) on his journey to greatness fueled by an embodied growth mindset, and quotes him:

*“The mental toughness and the heart are a lot stronger than some of the physical advantages you might have. I’ve always said that and I’ve always believed that”.*

She shows us how [Billy Beane](#), [Muhammad Ali](#), [Wilma Rudolph](#), [Maury Wills](#), among many others, are brilliant examples of the [growth mindset’s power](#) to allow us to reach our full potential—a potential we never dreamed we owned.

*“There is something about seeing myself improve that motivates and excites me”* said [Jackie Joyner-Kersey](#) who earned six of the highest scores in the history of heptathlon, set world records and won two world championships. She’s also an Olympian and won not one but two gold medals. Oh and her last two victories were earned through an asthma attack and a hamstring injury.

She tells the tale of [Pedro Martinez](#), [John McEnroe](#), [Patrick Ewing](#), [Keyshawn Johnson](#), among others whose [fixed mindset prevented them](#) from becoming who they were obviously meant to be.

The author reminds us that the less we have to work on our accomplishments and the more praise we get from them, the more susceptible we are to fall prey to the fixed mindset.

*“The naturals, carried away with their superiority, don’t learn how to work hard or how to cope with setbacks.”*

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### SPORTS: THE MINDSET OF A CHAMPION

"We (...) know that there is a mindset that helps people cope well with setbacks, points them to good strategies, and leads them to act in their best interest."

WHICH LEADS US TO CHARACTER.

She defines it first as:

*"The ability to dig down and find the strength even when things are going against you".*

It is what drives us to **work hard**, allows us to **keep our focus under pressure** and to **stretch** ourselves beyond our abilities and beliefs if needed. To rise to the occasion. To accept failure and turn it into fuel! **To reach the top... AND STAY THERE.** Because as she puts it:

*"It takes real character to keep working as hard or even harder once you're there".*

*"Character, heart, will and the mind of a champion: it goes by different name, but it's the same thing. It's what makes you practice, and it's what allows you to dig down and pull it out when you most need it."*

She shares her main findings about:

#### **SUCCESS:**

*"Those with a growth mindset found success in doing their best, in learning and improving."*

#### **FAILURE:**

*"Those with a growth mindset found setbacks motivating. They're informative. They're a wake-up call."*

#### **RESPONSIBILITY:**

*"People with the growth mindset in sports (as in pre-med chemistry) took charge of the processes that bring success—and that maintain it."*

*"In the fixed mindset, you don't take control of your abilities and motivation. (...) You are NOT a work in progress, you're a finished product. And finished products have to protect themselves, lament, and blame. Everything but take charge."*

The growth mindset is the foundation of self-development, self-motivation AND responsibility.

This is why it is also the foundation of character and what turns the athletes who embrace it into champions.

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### Fixed mindset curse:

“When people believe in fixed traits, they are always in danger of being measured by a failure. It can define them in a permanent way. Smart or talented as they may be, this mindset seems to rob them of their coping resources.”

### Growth mindset blessing:

“When people believe their basic qualities can be developed, failures may still hurt, but failures don’t define them. And if abilities can be expanded—if change and growth are possible—then there are still many paths to success.”